

03-26-2019

House Members,

My name is John Detherage and I serve as the Fire Chief for the City of Oxford in Butler County and also the President of the Butler County Fire Chiefs Association. It has come to my attention that once again there has been an amendment added to a bill that would give the Butler County EMA to the Sheriff. This is the most recent attempt in a story that started more than ten years ago. We have endured everything from late night, last minute legislative attempts at the State level to moves to "stack" the EMA Board. In that time, an untold number of personal and work hours, on the tax payer's dime, have been spent to defeat these attempts for the good of the first responders, local governments, and tax payers. This has not been limited to Butler County, it has also effected EMA Directors, Fire Chiefs, Police Chiefs, and elected Officials across the State. Now we find ourselves wasting that precious time that could be spent working to improve the level of service we provide the tax payers once again.

The Butler County EMA is run by a board of elected and appointed officials from the local jurisdictions in the County. The Board consists of a County Commissioner, a representative from the Sheriff's office, a Fire Chiefs rep, a Police Chiefs Rep, a citizen at large, and thirteen representatives from the Cities and Townships that make up Butler County. The EQUAL representation on this Board ensures that no one individual or entity will be treated differently or unfairly when it comes to distribution of emergency assets, grant funding, or the services offered by the EMA.

The Butler County EMA is one of the most respected and forward thinking EMA offices in the state. They serve as the central administrative point for our multi-jurisdictional CERT team, Local Emergency Planning Committee, Amateur Radio Association County Technical Rescue team, County wide Type 1 Haz-Mat response cooperative and our Type III All Hazard Incident Management Team that not only serves the County but has been called upon in other jurisdictions in Ohio and at the Federal level for major disasters. The members of these teams either serve on a volunteer basis or are paid by their home jurisdiction, not by the County general fund. Their acquiring and handling of State and Federal grants is second to none, to the point where no County general fund dollars are spent to run their office.

Yesterday there was an article in the Hamilton Journal News that described our County Commissioners desire for collaboration between the entities in Butler County. The model that has been created by our EMA is the perfect template to cause this to move forward. All of the local governments, working together for the common good of the County and saving tax payer money. With the help of our EMA we have been able to create these specialty teams so that each entity pays a small portion for the service and doesn't have to bear the burden of creating these service themselves.

At no time in the past or present, has the Sheriff brought forth any plan or consulted with any agency in the County about this take over. It is simply a one sided "Power Grab".

To destroy this efficient, well organized operation due to the wishes of one individual would not only be detrimental to the first responders and local jurisdictions of Butler County but to the tax payers as well. Please stand with us to do what is right and bring this to an end.

Sincerely,

Chief John Detherage

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